



# INPRINT

April 2003

## Past, Present and Peace?

### An Exclusive Interview with Bob Kerrey

by Karen Bray

My interview with Bob Kerrey, Wednesday, March 19, began an hour late due to traffic from heightened terrorist security and ended on his, the President of the New School's, musings on how the war will impact on terrorist threats to this city. During the forty-five minutes in between, the oft-times controversial leader of our school and I discussed his visions for the University's future, tensions surrounding his presidency, the financing of our school, the forum last semester, and ended - about five hours before the first bombs hit Baghdad - with his take on our War on Iraq.

I sat across a small conference table from the many faces of this institution's history. Along the wall of windows in his office on the eighth floor of the 12th street building sat a bust of Alvin Johnson, the first director of the New School after its founding by professors fired from Columbia for speaking out against World War I. Next to it was a photograph of Hannah Arendt, one of the many great intellectuals who found a haven from Nazi Germany in our University in Exile during and after the Second World War. And finally, President Kerrey, whose present position at the university in this post 9/11 time, and during this new war with Iraq has been riled in controversy. His ambition for the future are at the best going to bring this university into a new golden age, at the worst risk our university's core values and beliefs, and at the very least are certain to bring up questions and debate throughout the community.

Dean Swearer of Parson's School of Design, in a February 2001 article in The Omaha World Herald, said, "This is the



photo by Kate England

making of a university...[Bob Kerrey] could literally define this university." Recognizing the tensions in the gap between his vision and that of many students and faculty, Mr. Kerrey said, "Yes, no matter who the president is at the university there is going to be tension between what the president believes the university's going to become and what everybody else does. Most concretely here because we're New School University - there's lots of different opinions so it's not like it's me versus everybody else, it's me and lots of other opinions." New School University is, according to Mr. Kerry, a loose collective of distinct divisions. Therefore, the redefining of these visions as

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a collective whole is going to cause tension. And, recognizing this, he has set up systems to help ease and work with these tensions, including the establishment of a faculty senate and efforts to establish a similar student senate with representatives from all the divisions of the University.

President Kerry, in redefining the university, sees a need for openness, honesty and transparency in the planning and funding of this plan. He points to the fact that, "[the administration has] made the budget completely transparent so everybody can see what the numbers are," with an enthusiastic air of accomplishment, adding, "that creates a lot of problems as well as solves a lot of problems." The problems created are the questions and challenges that arise when any kind of difficult planning and decision-making is made public.

The public concern of each division is valid; as their autonomy and uniqueness are at risk in the process of, in the words of President Kerrey, "Becoming New School University." A proposed core liberal arts program, more structure throughout the university, and an emphasis on getting more full-time faculty at Lang, is creating a growing concern in the Lang community. We risk losing our valued flexibility and the uniqueness of our seminar style, becoming more of an NYU wannabe. Responding to these concerns, President Kerrey repeatedly emphasized the need to remain New School University and that, "[He] would like for us to be compared to NYU in quality...for people to say this is a great university and you get a great education here, but in many ways [he thinks] the comparison's going to fall apart." He then added what throughout the interview was like a mantra: "We're always going to have, well never say always, I mean our commitment is to seminars at Eugene Lang College with small classes, interdisciplinary efforts and open curriculum."

On core curriculum, he said: "You get a requirement at the margin, not a core like people typically think of a core which is very few electives and very little flexibility; we're not proposing to change the student-centered approach, the student being able to put their curricula together." This marginal requirement would be two courses that all undergraduate students would need in order to graduate. The courses, according to Kerrey, must incorporate the elements of liberal arts, art and design in order to keep students at all the divisions happy. When queried about what those two classes would be the president added, "I don't know, I mean this is where I may end up coming in conflict with people at the university, I may just have to pick them because the trouble is

in the university environment the decision making process can be so cumbersome and lengthy you may never get it done." Why is this urgent to accomplish? For President Kerrey having a core undergraduate curriculum means he can draw on resources, financial and human, of 4000 undergraduate students - from Parsons, Lang, Mannes, and the New School - as opposed to 600 Lang students - to attract distinguished professors. He envisions the core program as a way to enhance students' access to classes outside their division; which he recognizes as an unfilled promise that Lang makes to incoming students.

President Kerrey and the administration plan

on drawing more students to Lang by hiring more full-time faculty. This raises concerns about the value of the part-time faculty who are career professionals and concerns about who gets hired and asked to move from part-time to full-time members of the university. The president emphasized that there are two kinds of part-time faculty, those that are around for the long haul, but can't be full-time because they teach at multiple institutions or are currently professionals in the field, and those that are not committed to staying long enough to fulfill the advising needs of the students. *see page four*

## What Have We Seen & What Will We Get?

### George David and New School University, an Unlikely Match

by Eleanor Whitney

On January 29th, at the Fiorello LaGuardia Award Dinner, New School University honored recently appointed New School University trustee George David. David, and other \$1,000 a plate dinner guests were welcomed by a small group of New School University students holding signs and handing out dinner "programs" questioning whether honoring George David was congruous with the mission of New School University. George David is CEO of United Technologies Corporation, which incorporates companies such as Pratt and Whitney Aero Engines, Sikorsky Helicopters, Otis Elevators, Carrier Air Conditioning, and Hamilton Sunstandard. A large percentage of UTC's contracts come from the military. Sikorsky helicopters, for example, are used by all 5 branches of the US armed forces and for military service in 40 nations. David's catch phrase against corporate finance scandals is "What you see is what you get". Given the history of and present resistance to war and militarization at New School University, and the New School's mission to use education to produce positive changes in society, what members of the University community may be seeing in terms of the University's public image may not be what they are going to get in terms of funding and ideological direction of the Board of Trustees.

**A Good Neighbor?**

George David was named the Chairman of United Technologies Corporation in 1997, after serving as the chief executive officer since 1994 and president since 1992. He earns about 3.1 million dollars a year and enjoys reading and competitive

yachting. He is also a member of the Augusta National Golf Club, which bars women from membership. In 2002 he was named CEO of the Year by Industry Week magazine. This award lauded David for initiating UTC's Employee Scholar Program, which began in 1996 after David slashed 33,000 jobs at UTC in the United States and added 15,000 overseas. He explained this move by saying "This migration of jobs overseas is part of a national trend that can't be stopped," and insisted that US workers must become better trained in order to compete. In light of this, UTC's employee scholar program seems like a campaign to save their public image.

UTC itself claims to have a commitment to diversity, environmental protection, employee health and safety and education. However, after David vowed to diversify his eleven-member board within a year in 1994, it took him 7 years and six board appointments to name an African-American to UTC's board in 2001. UTC's website emphasizes their belief in being a company which is a "good neighbor". UTC's contracting and sales record does not necessarily measure up to their neighborly claims. UTC has sold S-70 attack Blackhawk helicopters to Mexico, Taiwan, Malaysia, Brazil, and Turkey. Sikorsky Helicopters is currently developing the RAH-66 Comanche helicopter, with partner Boeing, to be used for reconnaissance and attack missions. About this helicopter the UTC website states, "Now more than ever, with large and small countries around the world amassing destructive weapon systems, the U.S. Army needs the Boeing Sikorsky Comanche to secure its effectiveness in military conflicts." *see page six*



According to Mr. Kerrey, "The key question is are you available? Are you going to be here for four years so that a student can have the same advisor for a four-year period presuming the student wants that advisor? At Eugene Lang College we run between four and five advisors over a four-year career and that's just too much. It's inconsistent and lacks continuity and doesn't provide what an Undergraduate needs."

According to President Kerrey the needs and satisfaction of the students here are of utmost importance to him. Discussing that the New School is often seen as banking on its hey day of the early to mid 20th century and is often viewed as "quirky", he acknowledged that we do have existing institutions of excellence here, but need improved standards across the board at the University. In a more conversational moment of the interview he added, "I don't mind being called quirky but what I mind is if quirky becomes an excuse for low standards - in anything. I go over to the 13th street dormitory on a regular basis to get breakfast. I was over there I don't know 7 or 8 weeks ago, the floors were dirty, the food wasn't any good. And does that matter? It matters. If you're charging somebody 9000 dollars a year for a dormitory you better at least clean the floor." He used this example to emphasize his overarching idea that we must continually be, "Becoming New School University," improving our standards in all ways a little bit each year, but never be fully there, always be becoming.

Logically the interview turned to whether Bob Kerrey takes academic standards as seriously as financial concerns. A controversy that fueled this question arose last spring when the highly respected dean of the Graduate Faculty, Ken Prewitt, unexpectedly resigned after less than a year on the job. Dean Prewitt, a former member of the University of Chicago faculty, was highly respected by professors and students at the GF, and his resignation created tension between President Kerry and the GF community. Dean Prewitt, at a forum, spoke of a problem he saw in the administration's priorities; he felt financial concerns were put above academic integrity. At the same forum, at the urging of the audience, he gave an example of the problem: it seems there was an idea of "private bonuses" where deans would get financial incentives depending on the amount of students they recruit. President Kerrey then claimed responsibility for the idea of incentives, admitted that it had been a mistake, and stated he was sure to make more mistakes in his tenure here. I asked the president whether

this meant that his political career had instilled instincts in him that did not mesh well with The New School University. Surprisingly, he said with great conviction, "I think Dean Prewitt was wrong." He insisted that incentives were part of why we had one of the largest enrollments at Parsons this year, directly correlating to why we're in a good financial position now.

President Kerrey made this statement after Dean Prewitt's resignation: "This is an institution you can't fool around with. It's not a business, but you could run into financial risk, and that could put your survival at risk. You can fail here." I asked him if he could fail at academics while succeeding financially. His answer was that yes he could fail at both and that you can't just separate one

from the other saying, "Its like, I mean, trying to separate two strands of the DNA code, you can do it but if you try and do it in an unnatural way all you get is fragments of tissue." He then emphasized, however, how

difficult a year 2001 was; the Williams St. dorm saw a 15% drop in occupancy resulting in a loss of half a million dollars that year for the University. He stated that people were scared to be in New York. He added, if 10% of the students decide they don't want to be here anymore, the university would find itself in big financial trouble, "So you have to think about what those students want. And often times that means doing business like things."

I wondered aloud: what happens when there is a need to attract funding to the University for its survival, while at the same time many of the students find the sources of the money, as in the case of George David, morally wrong, and against the traditions of social justice and public service at the New School. George David, C.E.O of United Technologies (manufacturers of Black Hawk Helicopters) was appointed to the university's board of trustees. Mr. Kerrey's response was that there would be some places he would never seek money because of moral standards, but he adamantly insisted: "In the specific example of George David, I think I

can very effectively make the argument that his values are consistent - the fact that his company manufactures black hawk helicopters, his company also manufactures carrier air conditioners, 90% or 80% of his company is now non-defense, and his own personal values what he's done in support of education as all of us who were at the LaGuardia dinner know, are in accord with the values of this university." When I pushed further into this, bringing in the term "blood money," Mr. Kerrey responded angrily, somewhat interrupting me and forcefully saying no. He then calmed down and said that he would not in principle be against getting funding from companies involved in the defense industry or that had defense contracts.

I continued to press more on the financial

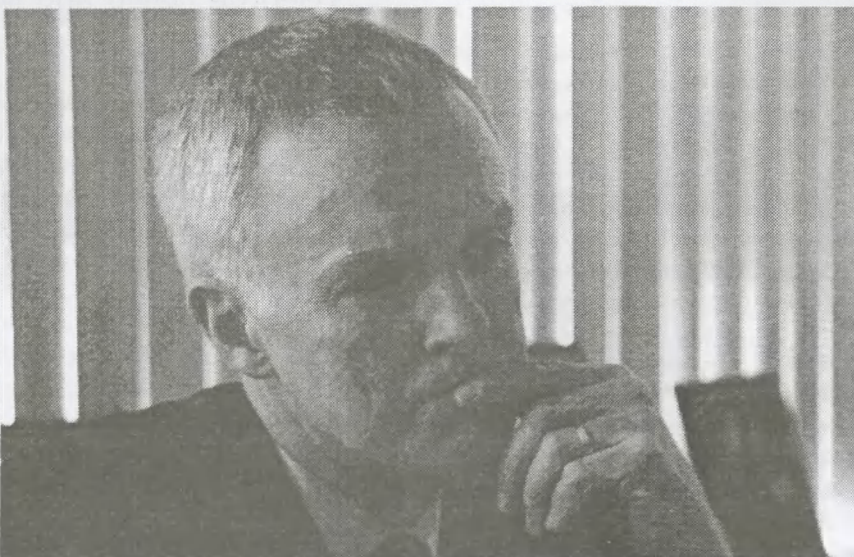


photo by Kate Englund

issue, pointing out the disparity between what many of the university's academic members, from students to professors, express and the school's financial backers, like John Tishman, who have described the job he's doing as, "superb". His response was, no, it didn't indicate a problem to him, and that his main concern and indicator of how the university and he are doing is whether or not a student is as positive about her decision to come here at the end of her four years here as when she started. In order to accomplish this, he said, there was a need to be concerned with both academics and financing.

Kerry has also had to deal with growing concerns about his public stance in favor of the war with Iraq and his participation in the Committee to Liberate Iraq, a hawkish lobbying group that supports our engagement in this war. He has described last fall's forum as an example of democracy in action, saying he was proud that students cared deeply about the issues. Many have claimed that the students were ill informed and Mr.



Kerrey accused them of being closed-minded. This prompted me to ask the president how the university could work to create informed and open-minded practitioners of democracy. I asked if he thought that the students had a clear understanding of where we have come from both as far as the university, with their assertion that his views violated a so called "pacifist tradition" at NSU, and as far as US Foreign Policy was concerned. He answered in the negative, saying, "It is not a pacifist tradition. There were pacifists here, but even some of them [like John Dewey] regretted it later. It is a Progressive tradition...but that doesn't mean that there won't be a time when the use of power becomes necessary."

He said that the students weren't informed enough about US foreign policy but placed some blame for this on his generation and on adults as a whole. When I pushed him for specific examples on how he and other adults at the university can shoulder this responsibility, perhaps through teach-ins, he said that there wasn't any one specific answer, that teach-ins were important, but that there also has to be an overarching emphasis on the connection between politics, history, and the outside world in everyday classroom scenarios.

In reference to the forum, students have said it was a huge victory to hold him accountable for his actions. His response was, "Well they can define victory however they want. But I wouldn't call it that. If they are concerned with Iraq I don't see how holding me accountable is a victory."

48 hours from President Bush's final ultimatum to Saddam, there was no avoiding the shadow of war. In a 1999 editorial in the Washington Post Mr. Kerrey said, "I believe Iraqis can rule themselves better than others can rule them." I wondered whether or not he believes the Iraqis will get that chance in a postwar government supported by this administration; if there will be enough funding; and whether or not we will truly support the building of democracy given our history of only opposing dictatorships when they stop being on our side. Kerrey recognized that we don't have a good track record with supporting democracy over dictatorship in the past, but said this was different from the Cold War when we supported anyone who was anti-communist. He argued that President Bush will be forced to uphold our commitments to democracy, because he "has all the eyes of the world on him." He insisted that Afghanistan has been self-governing and is not under United States Military control.

I pressed further on the issue of the motives and concerns surrounding the Bush adminis-

tration and this war. In the 1999 Post editorial President Kerrey criticized our callous lack of support for opposition forces within Iraq. I asked if this war will be callous if it does not adequately try to prevent civilian casualties, and if it was callous to wage an all out war on a country that has no relief or humanitarian support on the ground to prevent civilian suffering. President Kerrey responded simply that he believes we will work to support humanitarian needs on the ground and said that if we don't he will speak out in opposition to the lack of support.

Continuing to question the motives for this war I asked why Iraq and why now, comparing Iraq with Iran which may be better prepared for democracy, or Saudi Arabia which seems to have more direct ties to Al Qaeda, or focusing our efforts on the Israel Palestine conflict. The Presidents seemed to fall back on a stock answer, referring to "Resolution 687."

The eighth section of UN Resolution 687, "Decides that Iraq shall unconditionally accept the destruction, removal, or rendering harmless, under international supervision, of: (a) All chemical and biological weapons and all stocks of agents and all related subsystems and components and all research, development, support and manufacturing facilities; (b) All ballistic missiles with a range greater than 150 kilometres and related major parts, and repair and production facilities." Much of President Kerrey's argument rests on this section of this UN resolution. He argued that this resolution gives us the right to go in and fight for regime change in Iraq, whereas there is no such resolution to allow us to do so in Saudi Arabia or Iran, or that gives us as broad an ability to intervene in Israel.

When questioned about our right to be there, especially considering that Kofi Annan had recently said if the US proceeds with this war without the support of the security council it will be in violation of the UN charter, Mr. Kerrey replied, "I think Kofi Annan is wrong." And then elaborated again emphasizing resolution 687, and pointing to Annan's own support for UN intervention in Kosovo despite a Russian veto.

I pressed on concerns that the Bush administration is damaging our foreign policy and international institutions, by pursuing war, undermining the International Criminal Court, and dropping out of the Kyoto protocols. President Kerrey agreed, and was very critical of the gung-ho and ethnocentric approach that the president was taking on this war. He also agreed with Kofi Annan on Kyoto and the ICC. He continued to emphasize his concern with this administration's

handling of the war on the foreign relations front. He has even questioned whether he is on the right side of this, but said that in the end it did not deter him from his belief in the importance of this war and regime change in Iraq, and on the importance of resolution 687.

Resolution 687 in part 11, "Invites Iraq to reaffirm unconditionally its obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons of 1 July 1968." I pointed out to the President that the non-proliferation treaty calls for the nuclear nations to disarm, not just for non-nuclear nations to forego new weapons. And I asked whether he thought that, given our stances toward North Korea and Iraq, more nations will see nuclear weapons as the only way to remain in control of their own destiny. He agreed that was a risk and emphasized that he supported our unilateral reduction of our nuclear capabilities.

Finally as he was about to run off to a meeting that had been postponed due to a supposed increased terrorist threat, I turned to his feelings on this threat. I wondered whether he felt the war would put New York and the New School community at a higher risk of terrorism. He did not. He answered matter-of-factly saying, "No I'm not afraid of terrorism in the US. The problem with 9/11 was a bad rule at the Airlines, once you fix that, the risk of that happening again is gone." He continued by stating that the hatred that other countries feel for us is exaggerated, and that the resulting risk of domestic suicide bombings is slight: "Where are these [domestic] suicide bombings? They aren't happening." He also emphasized that whenever you take a stance on a contested issue, like when Fundamental Christians say we have to do something about what's going on in Sudan, you're going to draw some kind of hatred from the opposition.

The term Christian Fundamentalism caught my ear, and as his assistants were pushing for us to wrap up I asked him about the crusader aspect of President Bush's push for this war. He began by discussing the importance of faith in this country, but said that he was in favor of a secular state. He agreed that Bush's use of the word Crusade was dangerous and that the Christian fundamentalism was no different from Islamic fundamentalism. Yet, despite these dangers, those of fundamentalism both home and abroad, terrorism and war as a whole, he ended our interview with a smile and a handshake and with an air of confidence in his position on this war, and ultimately at The New School University overall. *i*